to hide the titan in the room

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by SunflowerStories

Summary

> “Think about it! Why does Hange take him to her creepy basement day in and day out? She’s studying him to find out about his titan powers!”
>
> “Or,” Jean suggests, “they’re having an affair.”
> //
> {They're not, in fact, having an affair. It's just Eren's friends covering up the fact that he's a titan. That's the whole fic.}

Notes

> Allow me to present you with this buffoonery. These shenanigans, if you will, this hijinking tomfoolery.

Steam still billows above Eren, he hasn't even cooled down from the titan Mikasa has pulled him out of. The only ones who witnessed it were Eren's friends and Captain Levi. Now they've talked to Erwin, and he awaits the verdict nervous. Is he a threat? Will he be killed?

"Eren!" Hange calls out excitedly as she runs towards them, "Pixis gave the order that your ability will be studied, but other than that, you're free to go!"

He breathes out a sigh of relief along with Mikasa and Armin.

"But you'll keep your huge little secret. Nobody outside this room must find out," Hange lectures, drooling at the prospect of a new test subject.

"That's non-negotiable," Levi says.

"Yes, sir."

Keep a secret. He can do that just fine.

"Eren Jaeger is a titan!" Floch Forster shouts, bursting into the dining hall. Sixty pairs of confused eyes stare at him and blink. Connie and Sasha stop eating and share a horrified look. It feels like forever until harsh laughter ripples through the hall, from every single soldier.

"Yeah, right. He broke Wall Maria too," Marlow jokes.

"No, I'm serious! How has none of you realised it? Haven't you heard the roars coming from the mountains in the nights? It's where he goes to transform! Haven't you also seen the steam, it's like, I don't know, a wildfire or something! That's not normal! I'm telling you, it's the titan!"

"Damn it, Sasha!" Connie pipes up, "Are you still doing that?"

"Doing what?" both Floch and Sasha ask.

"Stealing meat from our superiors to cook in the forest, of course!" He slams his fists onto the table and shakes his head dramatically. "You're going to get caught one day, and the consequences will be dire!"

"Whaaaa…?" Sasha asks, her mouth agape.

Connie stands up on his chair and opens his arms like he's a bird about to take flight, a rhetorician on the podium. "There you have it! Sasha is the sinner! The perpetrator! Sue her, she's gluttonous, but what can she do when our superiors eat such delicious meat while she

has to sate her hunger with scraps?" Connie has gone full on theatrical right now, and Sasha's face is red.

"No, I don't steal! Mikasa, say something! She was with me all night!"

"Yes," Mikasa says, "I was. She asked me to watch her back when she slipped out of the barracks."

"Mikasa???"

Everyone ignores Floch and swarms around Sasha to question her about the meat. Mikasa locks eyes with Floch and takes a bite of her food, crushing it between her teeth as a warning. Floch gulps and hurries out, defeated. Mikasa and Connie exchange a warning glance between them.

"Do not say it."

"Let operation titan protection commence."

"He said it," Sasha sighs.

Eren is on the training grounds, sparring with Reiner, when Floch approaches him. "I know your secret, Jaeger!"

Eren wipes his sweat. "What secret? What are you on about?"

"You're a titan!"

"Huh? A titan?" Eren gets taken aback and receives a blow to the stomach. He steps back, a hand outstretched in surrender, coughing from the hit. "You made me lose!"

"Floch, what are you talking about? This doesn't make any sense," Armin says carefully, as if talking to a crazy man.

Jean shrugs. "He does work out, but I wouldn't call him a titan."

But Floch isn't giving up. "Think about it! Why does Hange take him to her creepy basement day in and day out? She's studying him to find out about his titan powers!"

"Or," Jean suggests, "they're having an affair."

Eren's eyes widen. "Huh? Is your brain full of holes, horseface?"

Jean smiles with the scenario he's moulded in his head. "She's not *that* old. And definitely unhinged enough to tolerate someone as crazy as you."

“We’re *not* having an affair!”

“We know, Eren,” Reiner steps in, taking his role of the mediator. “We all know that you’re planning Captain Levi’s surprise birthday party with her, since you’re his biggest fan and she’s his… best friend. There, it wasn’t so hard, was it? The cat’s out of the bag now.”

“Yeah,” Eren says, “and nobody must know, so keep your mouths shut.”

“What?” Floch protests. “That’s not it! I know you’re hiding something!”

“Yeah, Captain Levi’s birthday party,” Jean says, stepping in front of Floch in his full almost-two-meter height. “And if you want your ass intact, you better keep quiet because he’ll hear you and it won’t end well for any of us. He hates surprises, but he won’t hate this one, because we’ve planned him… a piñata. Many piñatas with our faces, so he can kick us whenever he wants, but if he finds out, we won’t have a chance to explain. There will be carnage, and the blood will be on your hands.”

Eren, Armin and Reiner marvel over Jean’s creativity, and Floch has either taken the bait or he doesn’t want to face whatever’s happening in Jean’s mind right now.

He marches away fumbling, and Eren looks at his friends. “Birthday party? How did you even think about that, it’s insane! The Captain’s birthday isn’t until the dead of the winter.”

“*That’s* what bothers you? Anyway, I think we’ve got a problem.”

“Connie mentioned something about *operation titan protection,* but it was usual Connie shenanigans, so I didn’t think that we were actually busted,” Armin says. “He doesn’t have proof, so that makes it easier for us to keep denying.”

“Easier for you, maybe, but I have a bad feeling,” Eren grumbles.

“So long as you’re careful, you’ll be fine,” Jean says. “Just don’t do anything suspicious.”

Eren’s body feels leaden when he exits his titan, marks stretching down his cheeks. Mikasa is there to catch him. He weakly looks up at her, his body steaming. “Did you bring it?”

Mikasa pulls a vial of concealer out of her pocket. Eren takes it immediately and smears it over his cheeks, covering the titan marks.

“I brought a brush too,” she says helpfully.

“Nah. Don’t need it.” He wipes his hands from his shirtfront when he finishes, creating smudged handprints. They walk back to the barracks and that’s when Floch jumps out of the bushes, accompanied by a few loyal fans of his theories.

“THERE! RIGHT THERE, SEE?”

“See what?”

“The titan marks!”

“What titan marks?”

“He has titan marks, exactly like the books say a titan shifter would! They’re under all that concealer!”

“What’s under that concealer are his black circles,” Mikasa says.

“He doesn’t have black circles!” Floch whines exasperated. Who is he, Shadis?”

“I lose a lot of sleep, jackass,” Eren says. “I’ve got things in my mind. How dare you compare me to those monsters that trampled over my home? Do you think that’s funny?”

Floch falters now. “Well, take off all that concealer and we’ll see!”

“He can’t,” Hange says, joining them, “he was in the middle of a secret demonstration about the tactics of disguise. We were trying out a new palette of eyeshadow made of soil, for when our soldiers want to blend in with the high society. Eren was kind enough to volunteer to try it! Show them, Eren.”

And Mikasa paints over his cheeks and eyes and lips with dirt, and Eren looks something between plague infested and straight up terrifying. He spits out specks of it disgruntled with the turn this has taken.

Hange frowns in deep thought as she examines Eren. “He needs more brown on his cheeks.” She slaps a handful of dirt against his face, and Eren gags when it enters his mouth. “There! Perfect!”

Floch facepalms.

“Oi! Eren!”

He stops on his tracks and turns around to face Levi. “Yes, Captain.”

“What’s that I’m hearing about you and shitty-glasses having an affair?”

Eren will kill Floch or Jean or whoever spread that rumour they conjured on the spot, but right now, he has to get out alive. Beads of cold sweat coat his forehead. “No, no, we’re not! I’d never… she’s a superior! That was to cover up my secret, like you said I should, the rumour just got out of hand, is all!”

Levi rolls his eyes. “I know, you dimwit. I was just asking where that originated from, because it’s a weird-ass thing to say. I always knew Hange would marry a titan, I just wanted to make sure that titan wasn’t underage.”

Eren isn't entirely sure about Levi's intentions, but whatever it is, he doesn't want to be at the receiving end of his blows, for one reason or the other. “I assure you, Captain, I’m not planning to marry the Squad Leader. I know that she's taken.”

Levi snaps his head towards him. "By whom?"

"By, uh..." Eren is sure he screwed up. "I thought... I meant, I heard..."

The tips of Levi's ears are pink. He seems to have picked up on the implication. “Just go already.”

“Yes sir.”

Eren’s screams can be heard from across the forest when one miscalculated twirl of his blade results in his shin being injured. Badly. He lands, and Mikasa and Armin are quick to follow. Eren curses his sword and his bad luck, while Armin and Sasha hurry to cover the steam from his wound as it heals.

“You shouldn’t have tried Captain Levi’s reverse grip,” Mikasa reprimands, arms crossed. “You were practically asking for it, and you’re lucky you didn’t lose a hand.”

“My leg is still carved up!”

“That’s on you, Eren. You should’ve been careful.”

“Don’t tell me to be careful! You’re the one who ran towards those Aberrants during the previous battle without a care in the world! You’re the one who puts yourself in harm’s way all the time, and won’t let us kill half a titan!” He stands up, forgetting his useless leg, and he drops down on one knee, hissing in pain.

“There!” Floch shouts from atop a tree. “He’s steaming!”

“Oh?” Sasha looks at him, her eyes wide. “Floch says you’re hot.”

“No! That’s not it!” He jumps down. “Admit it! You’re a… why are you kneeling?”

“Uh…” Eren can’t tell him that he injured himself, those swords cut through stone like it was butter, so his leg should have been cut clean off. Floch will call his bluff at an instant. “I… um…” He turns his eyes to the girl standing over him. “Mikasa?” He takes her hands in his own. “Will you marry me?”

Both Armin and Sasha gape at them, while Mikasa's face turns beet-red. Eren isn't in a better position and neither is Floch, who is a mixture of embarrassed, furious and confused. "Stop trying to play it off, it's not working this time! You can't even marry, you're fifteen!"

Sasha claps a hand on the girl's shoulder. "Yeah, and better now than never. Right, Mikasa? I call dibs on maid of honour."

"And I'll be best man!" Armin stutters, still pale.

"You may kiss the bride. Stand up, Jaeger," Sasha says, and Mikasa hauls him to his feet, her face hidden by a curtain of black hair.

"I'm in so much pain," Eren mutters through his teeth while Mikasa kisses his cheek and hisses *hush!* in his ear.

Floch is borderline pulling his own hair. "WHAT IS HAPPENING? WHY IS NOBODY LISTENING TO ME?"

"What's going on?" a voice sharp as a razor and cold like ice makes everyone freeze. Levi stands before them, arms crossed, eyes judging. "Are you too good to follow the formation, you lot?"

Eren salutes. "No, sir! It's just that, uh… M-Mikasa and I want to get married!" he croaks pathetically and looks at Levi pleadingly. The Captain silently goes through the five stages of grief, but he knows the orders. The secret must remain a secret.

"You're fifteen, you dumb brats."

His back straightens and he searches into his Captain's eyes for some help. "Y-yes sir! But, uh…"

"We want to have a child as soon as possible," Mikasa says, and now it's Eren's turn to get flustered.

"Are you serious?" Levi asks, and Mikasa returns the stare.

"As a heart attack. Sir," Sasha chimes in. "She told me too. They'll name it Levi. And if it's a girl, they'll name it…"

Levi arches a brow. "Kuchel."

Mikasa nods, accepting his silent challenge. "Sure." From her tone, it's clear that she takes the case of the hypothetical child born of the hypothetical marriage very seriously.

Levi waves them off indifferently. "Fine, do your thing. Forster, to your position."

"WHAT???"

"Did I stutter?"

“N-no sir!”

When he leaves, Levi turns to them. “When I asked if you could keep a secret, I expected something reasonable. This is madness.”

All four of them stare at him, tight-lipped. And so he continues.

“Go pester Erwin with all this and you’re excused. Don’t forget to ask for a written and signed permit to get married.”

“Captain, I don’t think they actually want to marry. Although I will be best man when they do,” Armin says.

“Doesn’t matter. Ask him and do your best to describe his face to me after.”

And so Eren stands with all of them by his side, crammed in Erwin’s office, talking over each other about rumours regarding Levi's birthday and Hange's affair and Eren's wedding, and he wonders exactly where his life went wrong.

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